(c) whether out of 27 projects completed during 1993—98 only 9 were completed on scheduled and rest were delayed by 10 to 51 months; and

(d) if so, what are the reasons for the delay in execution of the 18 projects?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) It is incorrect that each Postal Circle executes less than one project per year with an average cost of just Rs. 21 Lakhs per project. These figures are just based on the survey carried out by Audit Authorities for 7 Posts Circles namely Bihar, Delhi, Haryana, M.P., Punjab, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu. Department has 22 Postal Circles (19 postal Circles during the time of survey) and each postal circle has enough projects for execution. In addition, there are a very large number of ongoing projects. Also Civil Wing executes maintenance work of thousands of departmental buildings all over the country. The projects are sometimes delayed due to the following reasons:—

(i) Natural calamities like flash floods, earthquake, etc.

(ii) Local disturbances like insurgency in some States.

(iii) Slow work by contractor for which penalty is recovered from contractor's bill.

(iv) Delay on account of local by laws.

(v) Non-cooperation of contractors.

Licences for long distance telephone services

1845. SHRI ANANTA SETHI: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the private companies granted licences by the Department of Telecommunications to run National long distance telephone services in the country;

(b) whether some applications are still pending;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the steps taken to clear these applications?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) One company has been granted licence for providing National Long Distance Telephone Service in the country and two companies have been issued Letter of Intent for signing of National Long Distance Service licence.

(b) to (d) One application received from Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited (VSNL) National Long Distance Service Licence is under consideration.

Sankhya Vahini Project

1846. SHRI K. B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Sankhya Vahini Project is facing closure in the wake of Carnegie Mellon University of US withdrawing from the project;

(b) if so, whether the reasons adduced by the Carnegie Mellon University for withdrawal from the joint project are red-tapism and in-ordinate delay;

(c) what are the reasons for bureaucratic bungling and inaction in such sensitive areas involving overseas collaborators; and

(d) whether Government would ensure that such technology-oriented projects are divested from bureaucratic dominance?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Sankhya Vahini Project has been shelved in the wake of Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) of US withdrawing from the project. According to the CMU, there was delay in launching the project and in disposal of a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) against the proposed joint venture in the Delhi High Court.

(c) and (d) There was no bureaucratic bungling or ination. The delay was mainly due to the Public Interest Litigation in Delhi High Court against the project. Further, with the formation of the Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) in October, 2000, the joint venture agreement was required to be renegotiated and fresh approval of the